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The learned monk as a comic figure: on reading a Buddhist Vinaya as Indian literature

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Abstract The difficulties involved in identifying, appreciating, and understanding the intentional humor of "other" people far removed in time and culture are well known, and are–not surprisingly–encountered in reading Buddhist vinaya or monastic texts written in relatively early India. This is particularly so, perhaps, because the expectation may well be that such texts were not intended to be funny, and the assertion that some were would seem to require some demonstration. But if it is conceded, or fully acknowledged, that Buddhist monastic literature written in India was first of all Indian literature, then Indian literature and literary or aesthetic theory may provide the tools for at least one such demonstration–Indian literature, after all, encompasses several genres (the "farce" and the "satire") which were certainly intended to be humorous, and Indian aesthetics explicitly recognizes the "comedic." Using these resources might at least allow us to see how some vinaya passages, which appear to make fun of certain kinds of learned monks, might have been read by their Indian audience.

Keywords Vinaya · Indian literature · Indian humor · Buddhist humor

Almost any discussion of Indian Buddhist humor will encounter—and sooner rather than later—some very weighty matters. In part, of course, this is because an Indian Buddhist humor is first of all, by definition, Indian—in fact probably far more Indian than Buddhist—and India has a large, sophisticated, and technical literature devoted to aesthetics and literary criticism in which

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the comedic (*hāsya*) is a recognized and theorized component (*rasa*).[1] Its dramatic literature in particular, moreover, gives a prominent place to a stock comic figure—the *vidūṣaka* or ‘‘buffoon’’—who has given rise to a good deal of learned discussion, both ancient and modern,[2] and that same literature has preserved—although possibly poorly—a significant number of ‘‘farces’’ (*prahasana*) and ‘‘satires’’ (*bhāṇa*).[3] Indeed, as Richard Salomon has put it, ‘‘satirical touches are found often enough, even in the great [Indian] classics,’’ and he cites with approval A.K. Warder’s claim of ‘‘a flourishing tradition of satire in ancient and medieval *kāvya*.’’[4] But humor, it seems, could also be in classical India—as elsewhere—subversive, even dangerous, and appears to have elicited on the part of at least some elites some unease or ambivalence. At least that is suggested by the legend at the end of the *Nāṭyaśāstra* which explains how the drama came down to the earth, and why Bharata’s sons, or those associated with the drama, are *śūdras*. No sooner, it seems, had Bharata’s sons gained knowledge of the *Nāṭyaveda* then they began to annoy everyone with farces devoted to comedy (*sarvalokaṃ prahasanair vādhanto hāsyasaṃśrayaiḥ*). Still worse, they produced a work that caricatured the *Ṛṣis* (*ṛṣīṇāṃ nyaṅgakaraṇam*), and the latter, being deeply offended, did what the easily offended *ṛṣis* and *gurus* always do: they cursed them, as a result of which the drama ended up on earth and they ended up as *śūdras*.[5] But in spite of their complexities, technicalities, and nuances these Indian literary and śāstric materials may be critical for understanding Indian Buddhist humor, first because they are Indian, and second because they are much closer in both time and culture than we are to our Buddhist texts: they tell us what writers and theorists close—or at least closer—in time and culture to our Buddhist texts thought would be funny. They provide, in other words, at least one possible solution—however partial or approximate—to an otherwise intractable problem that is repeatedly encountered in the study of other people’s humor.

Very recently, and in specific regard to Buddhist *vinaya*, Oskar von Hinüber has nicely put a persistent problem, met again and again, in almost any discussion of the humor of other people more or less removed in time and culture from the discussant:

[1] See the old Sharma (1941). More recent work—e.g., Siegal (1987)—has largely tried to side-step the more technical, ‘serious’ literature on humor (see Gerow’s (1989a) review of Siegal) perhaps because it isn’t very funny.

[2] For sources on the *vidūṣaka* see Siegal (1987, pp. 467–468), to which might be added the scattered references to the *vidūṣaka* in Bansat-Boudon (1992) and the discussion of this figure from a broadly comparative point-of-view in Otto (2001, esp., pp. 218–223), who resists what she calls a ‘‘considerable resistance among some Sanskrit scholars to the idea of the *vidusaka* as a court jester.’’ See also the paper by Gerow (2001).

[3] See Devi (1995), De (1959); Schokker (1966, pp. 39–64) and Janaki (1973).

[4] Salomon (1983); esp. 11, quoting Warder (1972, p. 167).

[5] Ghosh (1956–1967, Ch. 36); Nagar (1981–1984, Ch. 36)—It is interesting to note that one of the very rare references to drama in canonical Pāli—pointed out long ago in Wijesekera (1941)—also seems to take aim at *prahasanas* and to suggest that those *naṭas*, ‘‘actors,’’ who make people laugh end up in hell; see *Saṃyutta-nikāya* iv 306–308.

> "… it is mostly extremely difficult to guess, what was felt to be humorous or hilarious in ancient texts such as the Buddhist canon or its commentaries, which were both composed in a cultural environment largely lost to us. Consequently, many paragraphs which we are inclined to read with a smile today, may have been a deadly serious matter to those, who originally wrote them down."[6]

The point here could hardly be better posed, and yet we may be able to do something other than just guess, especially if it be allowed that Indian Buddhist literatures are in fact that: 'Indian' and 'literature.' Neither attribute is, however, commonly recognized or brought to the fore, and those familiar only with the Pāli *Vinaya* might well be disinclined to call it, for example, literature. But the case is very different in regard to another Buddhist monastic code, and was so from early on.

Sylvain Lévi, the great French Indological polymath, knew very well both Sanskrit literature—his first major published work was the still cited *Le théatre indien*—and the Buddhist *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya*, the *vinaya* we will be dealing with here. When he characterized the latter—and he did so several times—the emphasis was overwhelmingly on its literary qualities, not its technical or doctrinal aspects, and his comparisons were almost always with Indian literary works. He said, for example:

> "Ce Vinaya monstrueux, écrit avec art, mêle et brouille tous les genres; les prescriptions ont souvent l'air de simples prétextes à conter de longues histoires familières, héroïques, comiques, fabuleuses, romanesques…"[7]

He also described the hypothetical 'author' of this *Vinaya*, and, by extension, the work itself, as follows:

> "Un écrivain dont la fougue verbale et l'imagination surabondante évoquent le souvenir de Rabelais, et du meilleur de Rabelais, a pris prétexte des récits ternes et desséchés qui se répétaient dans les couvents à l'appui des prescriptions de la discipline ecclésiastique, pour en tirer une succession de contes qui veulent être édifiants, mais qui sont surtout amusants, pittoresques ou émouvants à souhait. Le Vinaya des Mūlasarvāstivādin's est une espèce de Bṛhatkathā à l'usage des moines."

But finally, and perhaps most surprising to some, he called the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya*, without any hesitation, "un des chefs-d'oeuvre de la littérature sanscrite[8]—not be it noted, a masterpiece of Buddhist literature, but, in effect, of Indian literature.

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[6] von Hinüber (2006, p. 29). See much the same point, expressed more broadly, in Gerow (2001, p. 169).

[7] Lévi (1908–1909, p. 78).

[8] Lévi (1932, p. 23). It is impressive in the extreme to note that Lévi knew this *Vinaya* largely through its Chinese translation, with its attendant problems, and in Sanskrit only through the "deliberate abridgements" of its narratives, "often very clumsily carried out" found now in the *Divyāvadāna* (see Bailey, 1950, pp. 166–167)—of the Sanskrit manuscript of it from Gilgit he knew only a few leaves. It is also worth noting that Lévi's impact on the study of religion generally is slowly being recognized; see on his influence on Mauss, Fournier (1994), and Strenski (1996).

It is, of course, probably obvious that even if one were not inclined to accept Lévi's characterization of the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya* as a ''masterpiece''—and many may be—still if his inclusion of it in Indian literature stands, then it would be perfectly legitimate—even necessary—to use in our exegesis of it the canons of Indian literary criticism and the tools it provides. It would also be Indian literature—secular literature—with which it should be compared, and which may well provide the most useful parallels. This, at least, is a hypothesis worth exploring, and that is all that can be done here in regard to a series of what appears to be, and what might for the moment be called, doctrinal jokes in the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya*.

While we might have romantic notions of life in an Indian Buddhist *vihāra*, the authors of Buddhist *vinayas* did not. For them, it seems, these could be unfriendly places. In the *Śayanāsanavastu* of the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya*,[9] for example, there is an account of a junior *bhikṣu* (*navaka*) who, though ill, was thrown out of his cell (*layana*) by a more senior *bhikṣu* (*vṛddhataraka*) when the latter, upon arriving, was assigned the cell, according to the principle of seniority (*yathāvṛddhikayā*), that the sick *bhikṣu* was occupying. The senior *bhikṣu* in fact left the sick junior *bhikṣu* lying in a pond. Although this senior *bhikṣu*—described only as *niṣṭhura*, ''rough'' or ''severe''—is never actually censured, when Brahmins and householders who came to the *vihāra* are critical of what occurred, the Buddha, in response to that lay criticism, lays down a new rule.[10] He says: ''Therefore, *bhikṣus*, in that case, a residential exemption must be given to a sick *bhikṣu*!'' (*tasmāt tarhi bhikṣavo glānasya bhikṣor vastuparihāro dātavyaḥ*). That is to say, a monk who is sick or has medical problems may remain in the cell initially assigned to him, and it is not to be reassigned.[11]

At this point in the account, we encounter the Venerable Upananda, a member of the notorious Group-of-Six and a learned *bhikṣu* who—unlike most other *bhikṣus* in this, and other *vinayas*—knew the doctrine, and could quote it, and who, as we will see, knew how to work the system, like all the

[9] Gnoli (1978, pp. 43.4–44.8).

[10] The need to avoid lay criticism as the motive for the promulgation of a new rule—or the modification of an old one—is an explanatory trope in this *Vinaya*, and probably all others—see Schopen (1997, pp. 218–220) and Schopen (2004a, pp. 99–100; 154–155; 271; 303).

[11] The key term here is *parihāra*, which I have rendered as ''exemption'' in light of both context, which requires something like that sense, and sources like Sircar (1966, pp. 238–239). The same term—in fact the same compound (*vastu-parihāra*) has been understood differently in Hu-von Hinüber (1994, pp. 215–216; §§ 62.1, 62.3). There it is said that *vastu-parihāra* ''ist bisher nicht belegt'' and ''vermutlich ist unser Wort ein Synonym für Mvy 9056 *vihāroddeśaka*'' (pp. 215–216), but this is an interpretation that may prove difficult to sustain. Both the compound and the passages in the *Poṣadhavastu* where it occurs will have to be revisited.—Guṇaprabha does not use the expression *vastu-parihāra* in his treatment of the *Śayanāsana* passage, but the sense of the relevant *sūtra* is clear: *nādhyuṣitaṃ glānenānyasmai layanam*: ''the cell occupied by one who is sick [should] not [be assigned] to another''; Sankrityayana (1981, 78.21).

members of this group.[12] He, it seems, was not inclined to leave the cell he was occupying. The text continues:

> When it had been said by the Blessed One: ‘‘A residential exemption must be given to a sick *bhikṣu*!’’, the Venerable Upanada, saying ‘‘hummm..,’’ remained silent.
> But when it was said ‘‘In six or seven days they will assign Bedding and seats,’’ Upananda, having wrapped around his foot a bandage used for sores, remained there. The *bhikṣus* who were the assigners-of-bedding-and-seats, having taken him to be sick, assigned him the cell he already had. When the bedding and seats had been assigned, Upananda took off the bandage used for sores and remained there. But then the *bhikṣus* who look after the sick [observing that] asked Upananda: ‘‘Has the Elder's (*sthavirasya*) foot gotten better?’’
> And Upananda said: ‘‘Surely it was said by the Blessed One:
> ‘All compounded things are impermanent’ (*nanūktaṃ bhagavatā sarvasaṃskārā anityā iti*)—how then will my ailment be permanent? (*tat kiṃ mama vyādhir nityo bhaviṣyati*).’’

The text, of course, goes on, but it is this retort of Upananda—an Elder (*sthavira*) who can and does quote ‘‘scripture’’—that for now is of most interest. The other *bhikṣus*—and this is a first signal to the reader—do not take him seriously, nor, it seems, should we. They say: ‘‘Too quickly the Elder has gotten better—hah, it is an imaginary illness (*kalpaglāna*)!’’, and the Buddha then modifies his rule so as to preclude a residential exemption for one feigning an illness.[13]

In a general way this little sketch might remind the reader of Sanskrit drama of the *vidūṣaka*, or buffoon, in Kālidāsa's *Mālavikāgnimitra* who feigns a snake bite on his thumb and wraps it in—of all things—his sacred thread (*yajñopavīta*) to get what he is after.[14] The incongruity of this is palpable, and that is the point. Indeed, G.K. Bhat has said of the *vidūṣaka*—the comic figure *par excellence* in Sanskrit literature—that incongruity is ‘‘the very essence’’ of his character,[15] and, as we will see, Upananda, in fact all the members of the Group-of-Six *bhikṣus*, have a good deal in common with the *vidūṣaka*. But there is a bit more here as well. Even without specific reference to the *vidūṣaka*, incongruency or

[12] In spite of the fact that the Group-of-Six (*ṣaḍvārgika*) *bhikṣus* appears to be a prominent presence in all Buddhist *vinayas*, little work has been done on them, and much of what little has been done is naively historicistic—to the references cited in Schopen (2004a, p. 351 n. 11), add Dhirasekera (1970); Schopen (2004b, pp. 176–178). For the moment it must suffice to say that although frequently referred to—especially in the secondary literature—as ‘‘bad,’’ ‘‘evil,’’ or ‘‘sinful’’ *bhikṣus*, these figures, as will perhaps become evident in what follows, are far more complex and interesting than that. They, again, are virtually the only *bhikṣus* who are presented as knowing the doctrine, and they are, for example, almost always *technically* correct in their shenanigans.

[13] Both special privileges for the sick, and malingering to obtain them, are evidenced by several forms of monasticism; see, for example, Crislip (2005, pp. 70–76; 81–83; 91–92).

[14] See Gerow (1989b, pp. 290–291). For this and other instances where the *yajñopavīta* ‘‘is put to comical use’’ see Bhat (1959, pp. 59–60, 127).

[15] Bhat (1959, p. 79).

inappropriateness (*anaucitya*) is, according to classical Indian aesthetic theory the trigger (*vibhāva*) of the comedic mood or "flavor" (*hāsya-rasa*)—Sharma, for example, says: "the real essence of the *vibhāva* of *hāsya* is *anaucitya*."[16] The presentation of incongruency elicits—and is meant to—laughter.

It is, of course, impossible to say whether or not the compilers of the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya* knew any of the niceties of the *Nāṭyaśāstra*, or any of the specific formulations of the theoreticians. But they could hardly have been unaware of the cultural value placed on incongruency which is formulated—not invented—by the theorists, and there is good evidence, as we will see, that our compilers had knowledge of theatrical plays—both of their composition and production—and, more importantly, of the inclusion in them of comedic episodes meant to trigger laughter. It is, therefore, not likely to have been coincidental that the *Vinaya* account of Upananda was constructed in such a way as to present a series of stacked incongruencies. There is the incongruency between what Upananda is (an Elder or *sthavira*), and what he does (feign an illness to keep a better room); the incongruency between the high seriousness of the doctrine he cites, and the low silliness of the context—a not overly clever scam; and the incongruency of citing *sūtra* in a *vinaya* context—this is almost never done. But the same incongruencies are also found in a second and in a third example from our *vinaya*.[17]

A second instance of the incongruous citation of *sūtra* or doctrine occurs in the *Vibhaṅga* of the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya*.[18] Here merchants from the north come upon an abandoned *vihāra* where they find only two old *bhikṣus* (*rgan zhugs* = *mahallaka*) who are temporarily resting there. The merchants want, in effect, to re-endow the *vihāra* and they give the two old *bhikṣus* "alms for three months for sixty *bhikṣus*," "alms for the festival of the eighth day, and the fourteenth day, and the fifteenth day," "medicine for the sick," "the price of robes," etc. Having made this lavish donation, they tell the two old *bhikṣus* to invite "good *bhikṣus*" (*dge slong bzang po*) to re-inhabit the *vihāra*. But the two old *bhikṣus*—and such unnamed *mahallakas* are repeatedly presented in this *Vinaya* as not very bright and easily fooled[19]—are duped by Upananda into inviting him and the Group-of-Six, and the latter "in no time" eat their way through almost everything. Finally, the monk-in-charge-of-physical-properties declares: "Venerables, the Community now has only requisites for the sick." But in response the Group-of-Six reveal their characteristic mastery of formal Buddhist doctrine. They say:

[16] Sharma (1941, p. 107).

[17] Before leaving this first example, however, it might be worth noting that 'jokes' about impermanence may have had a long shelf-life—see the oral tale set in the Kandyan Kingdom cited in what Siegal (1987, p. 466) calls "The charming, although not entirely convincing, essay," Rahula (1981, pp. 172–173).

[18] *Vibhaṅga*, Derge 'dul ba Cha 184a.1–188a.5. All references to Tibetan texts are to *The Tibetan Tripitaka. Taipei Edition*, ed. A.W. Barber (Taipei: 1991) and will follow the same format: Sanskrit title—section—volume letter—original folio and line numbers.

[19] On *mahallakas* see Durt (1980)—he speaks of their "stupidité" and "bétise congénitale." For the equally unflattering presentation in Pāli sources see von Hinüber (1997). *Mahallakas* frequently—as here—appear as the victims of the Group-of-Six in the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya*.

> Since, Venerables, as long as the five skandhas which are the basis of clinging to existence (*pañcopādānaskandha*)[20] persist, so long are we always sick. The medicine for the sick should also then be eaten!
>
> (*tshe dang ldan pa dag ji srid du nye bar len pa'i phung po lnga 'tsho ba de srid du bdag cag rtag tu nad pa yin pas na ba'i sman de yang bza'o*)

However incongruous or even outrageous this may seem, this is not the only instance in this account where doctrine or *sūtra* is cited. Earlier, in fact, when one of the *mahallakas* who has come to the Jetavana *vihāra* to invite *bhikṣus* to the re-endowed *vihāra*, and has told Upananda about it, Upananda wants to corner the invitation for the Group-of-Six and exclude others. He says to the *mahallaka*: "Since we six men each have a following of ten [i.e., we make up the right number], we will come out of compassion for you." The *mahallaka*, however, wants first to go and pay homage to the Buddha, but Upananda is worried that if he did so he might tell other *bhikṣus* about the re-endowed *vihāra*, and so says to him:

> Have you not heard it said, *mahallaka*, 'a god is one Who moves about in mind, not one who moves about in body'?[21]

Then he immediately cites as the word of the Buddha[22] what can hardly be anything other than a variant version or translation of the first part of a verse on the pre-eminence and mobility of mind (*citta*), found now, for example, at *Udānavarga* XXXI.23 and 24, and *Dhammapada* I.1 and 2,[23] grabs the *mahallaka* by the neck, forces him to bow right where he is and say "Homage to the Buddha," etc. from there.

Once again the incongruity or inappropriateness (*anaucitya*), the trigger (*vibhāva*)—according to Indian literary theorists—of laughter, is unmistakable. As in our first text, there is here the incongruity between what an obviously learned *bhikṣu*—in fact the same *bhikṣu*—says, and the reason he says it, the incongruity between the citation of both formal doctrine and *sūtra* for the purpose of fooling an old *mahallaka* and filling his belly. In the first instance cited from this text the technicality of the doctrinal language is particularly incongruous in its setting: the expression *pañcopādānaskandha*, while perfectly suited to an *abhidharma śāstra* makes little sense in a *vinaya* discussion of when to eat what. There is also the further incongruity—or seeming incongruity—of a learned Buddhist *bhikṣu*, already identified as an Elder, who is a glutton perfectly capable of eating everything in sight. But here there is a further and quite specific link with the comedic in classical Indian literature, especially its dramatic literature.

[20] The translation of this technical expression here is Edgerton's (1953, p. 145).

[21] While strictly speaking probably not quotations, gnomic utterances of this sort are scattered throughout this *Vinaya*, often as "editorial insertions"; see Schopen (2000, pp. 157–158: V.1). A similar statement occurs as an "insertion" at *Saṅghabhedavastu*, Gnoli (1977, 186.23): *vacasā mahīpatīnāṃ samṛddhyati, cittena devānāṃ, cittotpādena tathā samṛddhyati dhyāyināṃ sarvam iti.*

[22] *bcom ldan 'das kyis kyang…zhes gsungs kyis.*

[23] Bernhard (1965 XXX.23–24); von Hinüber and Norman (1995, I.1–2). The use of this verse here is, of course, equally incongruous to the action or context.

The *vidūṣaka* or ‘‘buffoon’’ has already been referred to more than once in a general way. But this stock character in a large class of Indian dramas has some specific and largely consistent characteristics which mark him as the comic figure *par excellence*. And that Upananda and others of the Group-of-Six were likewise intended or perceived as comic figures may be suggested by the fact that they too are marked by most—though not all—of the same characteristics. Certainly one of the most pronounced of these shared characteristics is the glaring gluttony, greediness, and fondness for fine food of the *vidūṣaka* and members of the Group-of-Six, especially Upananda.

In his old but still useful survey of the *vidūṣaka* in classical Indian drama G.K. Bhat starts his chapter on ‘‘food and drink’’ by saying: ‘‘But the dramatists have shown the Vidūṣaka, as a Brahmin, to be very fond of food,’’ and, after citing numerous examples, he says: ‘‘It appears from these descriptions that the Brāhmaṇa Vidūṣaka is not only very fond of food but is particularly partial to sweets and loves the smell of seasoned preparations.’’ Indeed, Bhat describes the *vidūṣaka* in the *Pratijñāyaugandharāyaṇa* this way: ‘‘He displays the characteristic greed of a seasoned glutton for his gift of food, and admires the smell of his own belching’’![24] This greed for the gift of food, of course, often gets the *vidūṣaka* in trouble, one example of which may be cited from the *Avimāraka* of Bhāsa, who Warder places in the 2nd Century C.E.[25] It is a particularly useful example both because it reveals the gluttony and greed shared by Upananda and the *vidūṣaka,* and because it reveals another characteristic of the *vidūṣaka* which Upananda most definitely does not have, and this difference may well point to a particularly Buddhist twist on their use of comedic figures.

In the second act of the *Avimāraka* the *vidūṣaka* not only gives what Warder describes as ‘‘a ridiculous description of the sunset, which reminds him of various kinds of food,’’[26] but in his perpetual quest for nice dinners, has a disastrous encounter with a clever maid in the King’s household who is bored and decides to have some fun at his expense. She pretends to be looking for a Brahmin.

‘‘Jester: What is it, Candrikā?
Maid: I am looking, Sir, for a Brahmin.
Jester: What do you want a Brahmin for?
Maid: What do you think? Why, to ask him to dinner.
Jester: But what am I, Lady, a Buddhist monk?
Maid: Oh, but you don’t know the scriptures.
Jester: How can you say I don’t know the scriptures? Just listen. There’s a treatise on drama called Rāmāyaṇa. I learnt up five verses of that in less than a year.[27]

[24] Bhat (1959, pp. 67; 68; 197); see, more recently, Shulman (1985, pp. 157–158) and Siegal (1987, pp. 199–200).

[25] Warder (1990, p. 264, § 943); see also Masson (1970, pp. 3–26).

[26] Warder (1990, p. 296, § 1002).

[27] Śāstrī (1912, 157); the translation here is from Woolner and Sarup (1985, Vol. 2, p. 71)—What Woolner and Sarup translate as ‘‘But what am I, Lady, a Buddhist Monk?’’ is *bhodi ahaṃ ko samaṇao* (*bhavati ahaṃ kaḥ śramaṇakaḥ*), but that figures who are called *śramaṇakas* are to be identified as ‘‘Buddhist monks’’ is far from sure, and the question needs to be revisited.

After this remarkable show of learning—I trust that even Buddhist scholars will know that the *Rāmāyaṇa* is not a work on drama—he claims also to be able to read, but when the maid asks him to read the word on her signet ring he cannot and claims: ‘‘This word is not in my book, Lady.’’ She, however, sees her chance and asks to see his ring. ‘‘Yes,’’ he says, ‘‘look at mine; it's a beauty.’’ She takes it, distracts him by saying the prince is coming, and runs away. He, of course, is left without both his ring and the dinner. He says, in part—still in Woolner's and Sarup's old translation—‘‘I knew what she was, the pick-pocket's slut, and then I let myself de diddled by relying on that dinner.’’

That the *vidūṣaka*—the comic figure *par excellence* in classical Indian drama—has much in common with Upananda in particular will be clear from our *Vibhaṅga* text alone. Upananda's dominant concern there is with food. It is for more food that he cites the doctrine. But even before that food is his focus. When, for example, Upananda and the Group-of-Six arrive at the newly re-endowed *vihāra* and get a look at its plenty, they realize right away that since the *mahallaka* who brought them there was ‘‘genuinely abstemious he would not think to give the first class food,’’ and they engineer the appointment of an ‘‘epicure monk’’ (*lto 'dun can = āhāra-gṛdhra*, *rasa-gṛdhra*) to distribute the food who ‘‘would distribute every day to the Community the eighteen kinds of soft foods, various and sundry fatty sauces, and well prepared drinks.’’ That, like the *vidūṣaka*, Upananda was sometimes ‘‘diddled’’ as a result of his obsession with food, and that this obsession was a defining and very long standing component of his personality, are both, perhaps, no better suggested than in a little account of one of his previous births:

> In a past time, *bhikṣus*, there were two *vihāras* on opposite banks of a river, one for *bhikṣus* who obtain their meals from the Community, the other for *bhikṣus* who beg. There was also a dog who recognized the sound of the *gaṇḍī* of each *vihāra*.[28] When he heard the sound of the *gaṇḍī* he went to the *vihāra* of those who obtain their meals from the Community and the *bhikṣus* gave him the leftovers from their bowls. Having eaten that he then went to the *vihāra* of those who beg, and after he had also eaten the leftovers there, he wandered around at will.
>
> And so it went until on one occasion an unexpected donation fell to those who beg and they sounded their *gaṇḍī* first. When the *gaṇḍī* dog heard it he began to swim across the river. But when he was half way across the *gaṇḍī* in the *vihāra* of those who obtain their meals from the Community also sounded. Torn in two directions, he tried to turn around, but the current carried him far down stream and he lost out on both meals.

[28] The *gaṇḍī*—sometimes, but probably incorrectly, translated as ‘‘gong’’—was the instrument that was beaten to summon the *bhikṣus* for a list of specific occasions; for references see Schopen (2004a, p. 277, n. 11).

What do you think, *bhikṣus*? He who was that *gaṇḍī* dog was at that time, on that occasion, this very same Upananda.[29]

Finally—as we will shortly see—when a clever dramatist wished to satirize Upananda and the Group-of-Six he did so by revealing their obsession with food and eating.

Although it is true that in both Buddhist and non-Buddhist literature Buddhist *bhikṣus* have a reputation for being preoccupied with fine food and not a few have been said to have died from over eating,[30] still this tendency is particularly pronounced in Upananda, and although much more could be said of this and other traits of Upananda, enough has probably already been said to establish the essential similarity between the figures of the *vidūṣaka* in classical Indian drama and the figure of Upananda. But since there is no doubt at all that the figure of the greedy, gluttonous Brahmin who says and does incongruous things was intended to provoke laughter, it would seem disingenuous in the extreme to suggest that the figure of a greedy, gluttonous *bhikṣu* who did the same was not. Both were cut from the same cloth or built on the same armature. Both, it would seem, would have had the same cultural reception. There is, however, at least one apparently significant difference between the brahmanical *vidūṣaka* and the Buddhist *bhikṣu*.

Even if the observation would have to be repeatedly nuanced or qualified in the specific instances, it is probably safe to say in a general way that the play-wrights of classical India intended their *vidūṣakas* to appear stupid and ignorant. Bhat says: ''He is generally called a *mahābrāhmaṇa*, the phrase indicating''—contrary to what we might have thought—''a stupid and ignorant Brahmin,'' and the *vidūṣaka* in the *Avimāraka*, for an example, already cited, is a Brahmin who cannot read a word and has no idea what is in the *Rāmāyaṇa*.[31] Obviously these authors were poking fun at brahmanical pretense. The Buddhist *bhikṣu* Upananda, on the other hand, while he might sometimes appear stupid, is never represented as ignorant. In fact he and other members of the Group-of-Six are virtually the only *bhikṣus* in this *Vinaya* who appear to know the doctrine, and who can, and do, cite it. This, of course, is a significant difference and must mean that if the play-wrights were poking fun at ignorant Brahmins, Buddhist authors were poking fun at learned *bhikṣus*. If the *vidūṣaka* was considered comical, so too was the learned Buddhist *bhikṣu*. Some—if not a great deal—of this may eventually be traceable to a not entirely harmonious relationship between *sūtradharas*

[29] *Śayanāsanavastu*, Gnoli (1977, 41.13). Identifying a learned *bhikṣu*—even in a past life—with a shiftless dog greedy for leftovers (see Footnote 67) was almost certainly not meant to be flattering.

[30] Granoff (1998, esp. pp. 56, 60, 66, 69, 70, 72, 90); Upananda himself dies as a result of his greed and of drinking too much ghee or clarified butter (*ghṛta*) at one time; see the account of his death in the *Cīvaravastu*, Dutt (1942, pp. 117.8–118.11).

[31] Bhat (1959, p. 163, n. 23); see also Shulman (1985, pp. 160–161, 170, n. 68), on *mahābrāhmaṇa*.

(those who 'preserved' the *sūtras*) and *vinayadharas* (those who 'preserved' the *vinaya*)—certainly there are signs of strain or ambivalence between the two groups in this *Vinaya*.[32] But for now it must at least be noted that the view of (some) learned *bhikṣus* as silly that we have, and will, see here is the product of those who compiled the *vinaya*.

A third and here final instance in the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya* of a doctrinal joke (or —to put it more ponderously now—the citation of doctrine in an incongruous context meant to elicit laughter) might be cited from the *Vibhaṅga*. This joke in fact is repeated three times in three separate but very similar accounts of local ladies visiting the Jetavana monastery as a part of their garden tours. These texts explicitly say that the Buddhist *vihāra* was regularly included in such pleasure tours: "It was the usual practice (*dharmatā*) of the wives of the Brahmins and householders who lived in Śrāvastī, when they went out to the gardens (*udyāna*), to enter the Jetavana and view the *vihāra*…"[33] Since too it was the usual practice (*dharmatā*) of the Group-of-Six to always hang around the entrance to the Jetavana,[34] these ladies were met by the Venerable Udāyin wearing only his flashy underclothes. After Upananda, Udāyin is probably the most strongly sketched and individualized member of the Group-of-Six, and Upananda's pronounced proclivity for food is easily matched by the Venerable Udāyin's interest in women. He—like all the Group-of-Six—-made it his business to know everything about everybody, and the text says:

> And because there was not a single person living in the six great cities whose caste, *gotra*, lineage, name, appearance, occupation or livelihood the group-of-six did not know, or had not observed or heard about or learned or determined, the Venerable Udāyin, seeing that large group of the wives of Brahmins and householders even from some distance, said, when he had seen them: "Welcome, mother of so-and-so, wife of so-and-so, woman of so-and-so, daughter of so-and-so, sister of so-and-so,

32 For a good example of competition for resources between such groups see the passage in the *Adhikaraṇavastu* where *sūtrāntikas, vinayadharas*, and *mātṛkādharas* advance conflicting claims to be the 'true' *dharmadharas* or *dharmabhāṇakas*—Gnoli (1977, 71.1). For one pole of the ambivalence toward learned monks see the passage in the *Kośāmbakavastu* where individuals who are called *sūtradharas*, *vinayadharas* and *mātṛkādharas* are described as "troublesome" (*vyāḍa*) and "pugnacious" (*vikrānta*) and end up arguing about the Indian equivalent of toilet-paper—Dutt (1977, 173.5–178.1); for the other pole see *Poṣadhavastu* Hu-von Hinüber (1994, pp. 354–356, §§ 63.1-.3) (where the term *vastuparihāra* occurs again) and *Uttaragrantha*, Derge Pa 151a.5–152b.3 where—not without some resistance—special privileges are accorded to learned *bhikṣus*.

33 *Vibhaṅga*, Derge 'dul ba Ca 206a.2, 215a.5; and 221a.3. On this and other associations of the Buddhist *vihāra* and the Indian garden see Schopen (2007).

34 *ācaritaṃ ṣaḍvargikāṇām aśūnyaṃ jetavanadvāraṃ anyatarānyatareṇa ṣaḍvargikeṇa*—*Karmavastu*, Dutt (1942, 199.13); also at *Kṣudrakavastu*, Derge 'dul ba Tha 101b.4, 232a.7; *Cīvaravastu*, Dutt (1942, 99.2); and a large number of other places.

welcome! Why is it that you, like the moon, appear only after a long time?[35]

The ladies—to abbreviate much—ask to be shown around the Jetavana and Udāyin obliges them, making pious talk, including several quotations. When he has shown them the *Gandhakuṭī*, the residence of the Buddha, and the residences of the various Elders, they end up at his, which is described thus:

> … the floor of his *vihāra* had been polished with bean powders, some of the wall decorated, bedding and seats of the best part of calf's hide were arranged, ten bottles filled with drink, together with cups, had been set out, and there were pitchers filled with all sorts of beverages (Ca 209a.3).

He invites them in for—as it were—a drink, but they ask to hear the Dharma. Again Udāyin obliges, "but as he was teaching the Dharma so he became more and more aroused… so he began more and more to caress their limbs and other parts of their bodies… those who he got a hold of flirted with him, ran around, necked, played, prattled, laughed and fooled around." The others left and when outside were "contemptuous, critical and complained." They said to the other *bhikṣus*:

> Noble Ones, those limbs and parts of our bodies that even a husband would not stroke, those the Noble One Udāyin has stroked! If our parents or sisters-in-law were to hear of this they would not even allow us to see the Jetavana, let alone to come here (Ca 209b.7).

When the other women had left, the text continues:

> Then Udāyin himself came out of his *vihāra* still laughing, and when the other *bhikṣus* saw him they said: "Why after having done such an unbecoming thing are you, Venerable Udāyin, laughing?"

To which he cheekily responds:

> "What? Have I been drinking liquor or eating onions?"[36]
> "Venerable, have you done that too?"
> "What else have I done?"
> "The wives of many brahmins and householders have made complaints and left."
>
> Udāyin said: "Venerables, that's the way blackguards are—When one does not teach even a single verse of four lines [of Dharma] to those full of jealousy they complain about one who teaches others!"

[35] *Vibhaṅga*, Derge 'dul ba Ca 206a.4—Here the Group-of-Six have a characteristic of another stock figure in Indian drama who is often comic, the *viṭa*, the "parasite" or "rogue". The *viṭa* is the stock speaker in a *bhāṇa* and Warder describes him this way: "The parasite is expert in polite and quick-witted conversation and flattery and so lubricates social intercourse. It is his business to know everything that is going on in society;" (1972, p. 13, § 30). This figure has received much less attention.

[36] Both, of course, forbidden by *vinaya* rule.

Then the other *bhikṣus* said: ‘‘But did you establish them in the truth?’’

To which Udāyin delivers his doctrinal explanation:

> ‘‘But surely, if one begins to mature their senses (*indriya*) they will in time also come to see the truths! (*je de dag gi dbang po yongs su smin par bya ba brtsams na mthar gyis dben pa yang mthong bar ‘gyur ro /* -Ca 210a.7)

In any number of other contexts, of course, Udāyin's statement would be perfectly good doctrine—there would be general agreement that maturing faith, vigor, mindfulness, concentration and wisdom—*śraddhā*, *vīrya*, *smṛti*, *samādhi*, and *prajñā*, one list of the *indriyas*—would lead to seeing the truths. But Udāyin's statement here is completely out of context, incongruous, and depends entirely on a *śleṣa*, a double meaning, one of the most common of Indian rhetorical devices. He is punning on the term *indriya*, which, of course, could also refer to the physical senses, and thereby turning a doctrinal statement into a joke about his actions. It is also well to keep in mind that we are dealing with a Buddhist text here—a text almost certainly written by a Buddhist *bhikṣu* meant for other *bhikṣus*, and repeated at least three times in this *Vinaya*. This is especially so since the portrait here of the learned monk—his fancy underwear, his inveterate busybodiness, well appointed quarters and his lechery—as well as the rhetorical tomfoolery found here is precisely the sort of thing that is also found in non-Buddhist sources that were certainly intended to poke fun at these men. In the *Mattavilāsa*, the well-known farce (*prahasana*) attributed to the Pallava King Mahendravarman (7th Cent. C.E.), for example, the Buddhist character—called a *śākya-bhikṣu*—is himself made to exclaim about ‘‘favors’’ (*anugraha*) ordained for the Community of his *Bhikṣus* by the Buddha: ‘‘living in palatial residences’’ (*prāsāda*), ‘‘sleeping on beds with well-made mattresses, having food in the morning, tasty drinks in the afternoon… the wearing of fine robes.’’ Given these ‘‘favors’’ he goes on to wonder how it was possible that there were no rules permitting women and alcohol, ‘‘How is it,’’ he wonders, ‘‘that the Omniscient One overlooked these?’’ (*ahava kahaṃ savvañño edaṃ ṇa pekkhadi*), and he concludes that such rules ‘‘were blotted out in the Piṭaka books’’ by ‘‘mean-minded and dried up old Elders.’’[37] In the still later *Āgamaḍambara* of Bhaṭṭa Jayanta (9th/10th cent. C.E.), when the main character first sees the Buddhist *vihāra* he says: ‘‘O what a charming monastery’’ (*aho vihārasya rāmaṇīyakaṃ*), but then almost immediately adds: ‘‘Clearly this is not a seminary for ascetics, this is a royal [pleasure] garden!’’ (*na khalu tapasvijanamaṭhikāsthānam idam rājodyānam etat*). Then, while he and the boy who is with him secretly observe the behavior of the Buddhist

[37] Text and translations—all but the last—are cited from Lockwood and Bhat (1981, pp. 42–45)—this was the only edition available to me; see also the more recent translation in Lorenzen (2000). Tieken, for example, says that ‘‘Mahendravarman I's authorship of the Mattavilāsa is exceptionally well documented;’’ Tieken (1993, n. 19).

bhikṣus as they began to eat, the following observations—somewhat abbreviated here—are made:

"Boy: Sir there is more! Look, here are buxom maidservants ready to serve the food, and catching the eyes of the monks with their flirtatious glances! And here some drink is being served in a spotless jar.
Graduate [*Snātaka*]: There is wine here masquerading as "fruit juice" …
Boy: Sir, look, look, this monk although thirsty is not so much drinking the beverage…. with his tongue as he is drinking with his eyes the candid face of the maidservants.
Graduate: That will do, we have seen the monastic discipline of the passion-free [*vītarāgāṇām āśramasamācāraḥ*]
Boy: Living in pleasure gardens [*ujyāṇa*], with drink and food both easy to obtain, untroubled by restrictions: lucky are those who become Buddhists."[38]

A final example here of this sort of thing which occurs in non-Buddhist sources, and one that involves a *śleṣa* as good as that found in the *Vibhaṅga*, can be cited from the *Padmaprābhṛtaka* attributed to Śūdraka. Here a Buddhist *Bhikṣu*—again called a *śākyabhikṣu*—is seen hurrying out of the courtyard of a courtesan (*veśyāṅganād drutataram abhiniṣkrāmati*). When asked what he is up to he says: *sāṃpratam vihārād āgacchāmīti*, which on the surface should mean—as Loman translates it—"I am just coming from the monastery." The fact that he isn't is obvious, but he is not lying either—*vihāra* can, of course, mean "monastery," but it also means "sport," "play," "pleasure," what used to be called "dallying," and a place where one does all of that. In case the audience missed the pun, Śūdraka has the speaker of the monologue say *bhūtārthaṃ jāne vihāraśīlatāṃ bhadantasya*: "I know the real sense of the virtuousness of the Reverend's *vihāra*." The verbal gymnastics, however, do not end here. The *bhikṣu* claims to have been consoling with the words of the Buddha (*buddhavacana*) a whore named, interestingly enough, Saṃghadāsikā, Little Slave of the Saṅgha, whose mother had died. The speaker of the monologue does not buy this and the *bhikṣu* says: "But excuse me, Sir,—surely one must develop kind thoughts (*prasannacitta*) towards all living beings!" The response to which—not unlike in our *Vibhaṅga* text—is: "Because your reverence is always *so* kind, you will indeed attain *parinirvāṇa* by taking care of your craving [i.e., by "consoling" prostitutes] (*sthāne nityaprasanno bhadantaḥ tṛṣṇācchedena parinirvāṇaṃ prāpsyasi*).[39]

This small sampling should suffice to show that the kind of representations of certain kinds of Buddhist *bhikṣus*—and especially of the Group-of-Six—found in the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya* is found as well in Indian secular literature. But this observation has at least two important correlates. First of all, the secular sources cited here are of a particular kind: the *Mattavilāsa* is a farce (*prahasana*), the *Āgamaḍambara* is a "satirical college-drama," and the *Padmaprābhṛtaka* is a *bhāṇa* or "comic monologue." By virtue of their genre alone, then, there is no

[38] For the *Āgamaḍambara* both text and translation are cited from Dezsö (2005, pp. 54–55; 58–59).

[39] The text and some of the translation here are cited from Loman (1956, pp. 36 (§§ 23–4), 62).

doubt at all that these works were intended to provoke laughter, and that the 'character sketches' they contain were meant to be, and were considered, funny. But given the basic similarity between these sketches and those of Upananda and Udāyin in our *Vinaya*, it would, again, be disingenuous to maintain that while the former were intended to provoke laughter, the latter were not. A second correlate is even broader in its implications and concerns not just the history of Buddhist literature, but the history of Indian literature as a whole.

It will have been noticed that none of the examples cited here from secular literature is particularly early. Indeed it is not easy to place either the extant *prahasanas* or the extant *bhāṇas* early in the history of Sanskrit drama. The *Mattavilāsa* ''is the earliest *prahasana* that has come down to us,''[40] but dates only to the 7th century C.E., and while Warder would assign the *Padmaprābhṛtaka* to the 3rd century, Schokker can find arguments for either the 3rd/4th or 5th/6th centuries.[41] The *Āgamaḍambara* is later still. But if Gnoli is right in placing the ''compilation'' of the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya* in ''the times of Kaniṣka'' (and the chances seem good that he is),[42] and if Falk is right in putting the beginning of the Kūṣan era in the early 2nd Century C.E. (and the chances for this too are good),[43] and if finally, the comedic—some might prefer 'satirical'—character of the sketches of Buddhist *bhikṣus* in this *Vinaya* is acknowledged, then it can at least be said that the kind of comedic or satirical sketches of Buddhist *bhikṣus* found in extant Indian secular literature are in fact attested even earlier in Buddhist sources themselves, and the possibility of these Buddhist sources having had a significant influence on both the *prahasana* and *bhāṇa* becomes very real.

What to call these sketches, or how precisely to characterize them, remains, however, an open question. This might be especially so in regard to the role of the citation or quotation of doctrine in them: are such citations making fun of doctrine, or parodying it, or satirizing certain kinds of *bhikṣus*? Here too a glance at Indian secular literature might prove useful.

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[40] Devi (1995, 43).

[41] Warder (1977, pp. 5, § 1160; 37, § 1218); Schokker (1966, p. 31), (cf. the caution expressed in Loman, 1956, p. 12). Here epigraphical usage might prove useful. The title in the *Padmaprābhṛtaka* that Loman translates as ''Buddhist mendicant'' is *śākyabhikṣu*. But this title does not occur in Indian inscriptions until the 4th century C.E., and not commonly until the 5th/6th centuries (see Schopen, 2005a, pp. 223–246, esp. 237—an extremely isolated possible exception might be an inscription from Satdhara, one of the group of sites around Sāñci, which Agrawal reads as *sakiya bhikhuniya pemutaka*, and translates as ''the gift of a female Śākya monk, Premamitrā (?)''; Agrawal (1997, p. 414); His reading, however, is problematic in a number of ways and cannot be confirmed since no photo or rubbing is provided.) This usage would seem to render Warder's dating doubtful, and would seem to point towards Schokker's latest date (note that the author of the *Padmaprābhṛtaka* also uses the title *śākyabhikṣukī* in Loman's § 21.22). It is also worth adding that if *śākyabhikṣu* was a title used specifically by that group of groups which we call ''the'' Mahāyāna—and that still ''does not seem an unreasonable interpretation''—then it would seem that those secular literary works that use this title are not referring to Buddhist *bhikṣus* as a whole, but to a specific sub-group, and that they therefore may provide us another little window on the social reception of ''the'' Mahāyāna in India.

[42] Gnoli (1977, xviii—xxiii); see also most recently Schopen (2005a, pp. 75–76).

[43] Falk (2001).

Salomon, for example, has said that the kind of "parody" that could be involved in our *Vinaya* passages—"the imitation of sacred texts with a specifically satirical intent"—"is rather unusual in Sanskrit,"[44] and while this certainly seems to be so, something of the sort seems to occur already in the *Ubhayābhisārikā* attributed to a Vararuci, which Warder says "is probably the earliest Indian play now available intact,"[45] and is a *bhāṇa* or "satirical monologue." Here, early on, there is a tart exchange between the *viṭa* or "rogue," the traditional speaker in a *bhāṇa*, and " a supposed Vaiśeṣika…nun"—De describes her as a "Buddhist Parivrājikā of questionable morals, quoting Vaiśeṣika and Sāṃkhya philosophy," but while she certainly quotes "Vaiśeṣika and Sāṃkhya philosophy," there is no reason at all to take her as a Buddhist.[46] The exchange between them is a clever bit of repartee, full of sexual innuendos and unremitting punning, that exploits the double meanings of the key technical vocabulary of both philosophical systems, but it comes off flat in translation.[47] Suffice it to say that the punning off technical 'doctrinal' terms found here—though far more extended—is exactly of the same sort as that found in retorts of both Upananda and Udāyin. Whether this is best called a parody of these doctrines, however, remains unsure, and the same issue arises in regard to another work at the other end of the chronological spectrum.

It has been noted more than once that the Kashmiri Kṣemendra (11th Cent.) has reworked several verses of the *Bhagavad Gītā* in his "satirical" *Deśopadeśa*.[48] Since Richard Salomon has already nicely set out these verses from the *Gītā* with Kṣemendra's reworkings we need only cite one example.[49] This particular example involves a simile that is found as well in Buddhist sources.[50] *Gītā* v. 10 says

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[44] Salomon (1983, p. 28).

[45] Warder (1990, p. 346, § 1101).

[46] "Supposed Vaiśeṣika…nun" are Warder's words; for De see (1959, p. 15). In his characterization we have a problem similar to the one stated in n. 27 above: the tendency to identify any female figure in Indian literature who is called a *parivrājikā*, or something like it, as a Buddhist needs also to be revisited.

[47] See, for example, the translation in the unfortunately titled Ghosh (1975) Part I, 9–11 and notes (he renders *parivrājikā* simply as "itinerant female recluse"—see previous note), Part II, 6.14–7.16—Venkatacharya and Warder (1967) was not available to me, but see Warder (1990, p. 348, § 1106).

[48] Salomon (1983, p. 26); Sato (1994, p. 15, n. 3)—Kṣemendra also does much the same sort of thing with verses from the *Gītā* in his *Kalāvilāsa*, another of his satirical works; see Vasudeva (2005, pp. 361 (G4.39), 362 (G6.4), 363 (G6.7, G6.16, G6.17))—Shulman sees "what must surely be a self-conscious parody of the opening chapter of the *Bhagavadgītā*" in the Epic itself in the *Virāṭaparvan* (1985, p. 262), but van Buitenen is less sure (1978, p. 15).

[49] The texts are cited from Salomon with one small correction. Note that in this particular example of Kṣemendra's use of the *Gītā* the idea he expresses is not a new one. Shulman, for example, says of the prostitute's lack of feeling and attachment—giving references—"…as many passages tell us, this triumph over attachment makes the *veśyā* rather like the dispassionate *yogin* or *sannyāsin*," and then adds—seeing, perhaps, what Kṣemendra had seen before him—that this "seems almost a textbook example of the *Gītā's* goal of detached worldly action;" (1985, pp. 308, 309).

[50] See, for example, Lamotte (1981).

brahmaṇy ādhāya karmāṇi saṅgaṃ tyaktvā karoti yaḥ/ lipyate na sa pāpena padmapatram ivāmbhasā//

He who acts after directing the fruit of his actions onto Brahma, after giving up attachment, he is not touched by what is bad, like a lotus leaf by water //

Kṣemendra takes over the second line of this almost entirely, changing only *na sa pāpena* into *yan na rāgeṇa*, substituting "passion" for "what is bad." But he supplies a completely different first line:

mokṣagāmi mano manye veśyāyā ratisaṃgame/ lipyate yan na rāgeṇa padmapatram ivāmbhasā// (III.28)

I think the mind of a whore is on its way to salvation when she is making love
Since it is not touched by passion, like a lotus leaf by water //

Kṣemendra does very much the same sort of thing with three other verses, and Salomon says: "It is typical of Kṣemendra's playful and irreverent style that he chooses to satirize villains, skinflints, and whores, with parodies not only of sacred texts, but even of the most revered of them all, the *Bhagavad Gītā*." But—as we have seen—he also immediately adds: "Parody of this sort—that is to say, imitation of sacred texts with a specifically satirical intent—is rather unusual in Sanskrit…"[51] But while this last remark must remain true in general terms, we have already seen something like this "imitation of sacred texts with a specifically satirical intent" in the *Ubhayābhisārikā*…if, that is, Vaiśeṣika and Sāṃkhya formal doctrine be considered "sacred." More importantly, however, it is not easy to avoid the observation that what Kṣemendra was doing in the 11th century looks very much like what the compilers of the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya* had already done—also in Sanskrit—long before. While they were not aiming at "villains, skinflints and whores," but rather at a certain type of learned *bhikṣu*, these Buddhist 'authors' do indeed appear to have used central doctrines from "sacred texts"—*sarvasaṃskārā anityā iti*—"with a specifically satirical intent." It is in fact possible that Kṣemendra knew this *vinaya*,[52] but even if that cannot be conclusively demonstrated it would seem once again clear that including the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya* in the history of Sanskrit literature—as Lévi suggested we do—and reading each in light of the other, will prove profitable for both.

[51] Salomon (1983, pp. 27–28).

[52] That he knew Buddhist narrative literature is, of course, certain given his *Bodhisattvāvadānakalpalatā*, and although his exact sources have not been determined, there is little doubt that the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya* was a major repository of such narrative material (see Panglung, 1981, esp. 209–210 for a table of *avadānas* found in both the *Bodhisattvāvadānakalpalatā* and this *Vinaya*, and this table is not complete), and it appears to have been well known to a significant number of Kashmiris who participated in its translation into Tibetan a century or two before Kṣemendra (see Naudou, 1968, pp. 86–88). Earlier still, in the second half of the 8th century, at least one Chinese "pilgrim" monk was able to study the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya* in Kashmir (Lévi and Chavannes, 1895); etc.

A final text from the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya* that might be cited here could serve as a kind of summary of several issues raised so far. At the very least it might provide clear proof that the compilers of this *Vinaya* were familiar with the composition and production of Indian dramas. Indeed, the details this little text provides would seem to suggest a familiarity with Indian theater at a relatively early stage of its development. It would also seem to confirm from an even stronger angle that the type of learned *bhikṣu* represented by the Group-of-Six was in fact an object of ridicule, and that presentations of them were intended and perceived to be comic—the comic interlude in the performance described in this text is, again, entirely taken up with actions of two members of the group.

Like the second and third examples of the citation of doctrine in incongruous contexts cited above, the text here at issue comes from the *Vibhaṅga*,[53] but unlike them it has been easily available in one form or another for a very long time. Already in 1877 Anton von Schiefner had translated the Tibetan translation of the text into German as one of what he titled ‘‘Indische Erzählungen,’’ and this was quickly translated into English (1882) by W.R.S. Ralston, in a collection of these, that he much less fortunately titled *Tibetan Tales*, with *Derived from Indian Sources* only as a sub-title that was frequently omitted in citation—it is worth repeating, therefore, that these are not Tibetan, but Indian tales, and that the whole would have been more accurately titled ‘‘Tales from the *Mūlasarvastivāda-vinaya*,’’ since all but a few of the translations are from it.[54] Only 8 years after Ralston—and referring to it— Sylvain Lévi then published a detailed paraphrase of the text in French.[55]

The first part of the text gives an account of two local *nāgarājas* in Rājagṛha who were inadvertently expelled from his kingdom by Bimbisāra, when he mistook them for impudent householders. Their departure had, of course, disastrous consequences—springs, lakes, and pools dried up, the crops failed—but when Bimbisāra was informed of their true identity by the Buddha and, realizing what he had done, tried to get the *nāga* kings to return, they agreed to do so only if he built a ‘‘temple’’ (*lha khang* = *devakula*) for each, and established a ‘‘festival’’ for them which would be held every 6 months. Bimbisāra did both and thus arose ‘‘the festival of the *Nāga* Kings Giri and Valguka’’ (*giri-valguka-yātra*), these being the names of the two *nāgarājas*. This was an important festival in the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya* that is referred to not just here in the *Vibhaṅga*, but also in the *Bhikṣuṇī-vibhaṅga* and the

[53] *Vibhaṅga*, Derge ’dul ba Ja 221a.1–230b.1.

[54] According to Panglung (1981, p. 255), von Schiefner’s translation first appeared in *Bulletin de l’Académie Impériale des Sciences de St.-Petersbourg* 13 (1877)—I have not seen this. For the English translation see Ralston (1882, pp. 236–246).

[55] Lévi (1890, pp. 54–56).

Pravrajyā and *Bhaiṣajya-vastus*,[56] and its 'origin tale'—at least as it is told here in the *Vibhaṅga*—would seem to reflect an attempt on the part of the compilers to associate it with the Buddha and the Buddhist community. If so, it would seem to represent another instance of the inclusion or co-option of local spirits by a community of Buddhist *bhikṣus*.[57] But to pursue this would lead us too far afield, and here it need only be kept in mind that the drama which we are about to meet—and its comic interlude—were written and staged on the occasion of this festival, and this alone is of some interest.

The narrative fact that the drama we have to do with was presented on the occasion of a festival is in full conformity with what is known about the production of plays in early India. Warder, for example, says: "the prologues of plays often name a festival for which they were performed, and it is clear that the primary function of the drama in ancient and medieval India… was this social one… and that on the frequent festival occasions every city in India and many towns and villages enjoyed performances of plays."[58] Viewed from the point-of-view of the performers, who made their living from such plays, at least part of the reason for this is obvious: festivals would provide a large audience. Indeed, our *Vibhaṅga* text says: "When the festival (*dus ston*) took place there (in Rājagṛha), then a crowd of large groups of people from the six great cities assembled and congregated together."[59]

A second narrative fact in the *Vibhaṅga* is also in conformity with what is found elsewhere. The text says that on one occasion when the festival of the *Nāga* Kings Giri and Valguka was taking place in Rājagṛha an "actor" from the south went there—the Tibetan text has *gar mkhan*, an attested translation of *naṭa*, and a similar text in the *Avadānaśataka* dealing with the same festival has *dakṣiṇāpathān naṭācārya āgataḥ*.[60] But Lévi has already pointed out that "le sud est la patrie classique des comédiens, dans les textes bouddhiques et dans nombre de prologues [of secular dramas]."[61]

Once the *naṭa* has arrived at Rājagṛha at the time of the festival the text says he thought to himself:

[56] *Bhikṣuṇī-vibhaṅga*, Derge 'dul ba Ta 244a.5; *Pravrajyāvastu*, Vogel and Wille (1984), esp. 303 (fol. 7v.8, .9); *Bhaiṣajyavastu*, Derge 'dul ba Kha 8a.4—also at Speyer (1906–1909, 24.6); *Vinayasaṃgraha* of Viśeṣamitra, Derge, bstan 'gyur, 'dul ba Nu 231b.7—In both von Schiefner/Ralston and Lévi the names appear as Girika and Sundara, which needs to be corrected in light of the now available Sanskrit.

[57] Schopen (2002).

[58] Warder (1972, p. 13, § 29).

[59] *Vibhaṅga*, Derge 'dul ba Ja 224b.1—though little studied, there is also a cycle or series of more explicitly Buddhist festivals frequently referred to in this *Vinaya*, and large crowds are commonly mentioned in regard to them as well; for the moment see Schopen (2005a, pp. 130, 132–135); Schopen (2005b), esp. pp. 299–300 and n. 5; 304 and n. 21; 308.

[60] Speyer, *Avadānaçataka* ii 24.7; likewise *Bhikṣuṇī-vibhaṅga*, Derge 'dul ba Ta 244a.5: *gar mkhan gyi slob dpon chen po zhig 'ongs te/.*—In what follows I use the term *naṭa* since the figure in question is more than just an "actor".

[61] Lévi (1890, p. 55).

> "Is there a way by which both this crowd of large groups of people would be delighted (*mngon par dga' ba* = *abhi-√nand*—the goal, in effect, of all drama), and a handsome profit would also be made?"
>
> Having thought thus he considered further: "If a panegyric (*bsngags* = *praśasti*) of a distinguished man (*skyes bu gtso bo* = *punnāga*) were to be treated, then both this crowd of large groups of people would be delighted, and a handsome profit would also be made." But since the great majority of that crowd of large groups of people was then well disposed toward the Blessed One, that *naṭa* considered still further: "Since, indeed, the world together with the gods is well disposed toward the Blessed One, and since, if a panegyric of the Buddha, the Blessed One, would be treated both the large crowd would be delighted, and a handsome profit made, a panegyric of the Buddha, the Blessed One, should be treated." (Ja 224b.2)

Having determined what, in effect, would be a suitable topic for his play, the *naṭa* was, however, still not able to present it because, it seems, there was no drama on that theme, or he at least did not have such in his repertoire, and had therefore to go to the *bhikṣus* to collect material on the details of the biography of the Buddha to compose one for the occasion. Our text, then, might well be reflecting a situation very like that postulated by Warder for the early history of Sanskrit drama:

> "The companies of actors in ancient times had playwrights attached to them to prepare plays as needed, or the producer himself might have arranged plays on stories well known to the actors. The early productions were probably ephemeral and it was presumably only later that fixed texts began to be handed down and to be permanently recorded in book form."[62]

Indeed, a reference later in our text to a second play leaves something of the same impression: when the Group-of-Six want to put on a play that will best the one the *naṭa* is about to compose, they too have no text and they must go to the Group-of-Twelve, a group of clever *bhikṣuṇīs* of the same character as the Group-of-Six, and ask them for help. They say: "Sisters, tell us whatever you remember from that drama (*nāṭaka*) which we produced named *The Blessed One Undertaking the Practice of the Bodhisattva as Kuru* (*… dong nas smras pa / sring mo dag bdag cag gis bcom ldan 'das byang chub sems dpa'i spyod pa la 'jug pa na sgra mi snyan zhes bya ba'i gar thabs byas pa gang yin pa de las cung zad ci dran pa bgro'o zhes…*).[63] The text here is, of course, open to more than one interpretation: von Schiefner/Ralston—and Lévi, presumably following them—have understood the text to be saying that the play on Kuru was composed or produced by the *bhikṣuṇīs* themselves, and although

[62] Warder (1972, p. 54, § 121); and note that in both the *Avadānaśataka* and *Bhikṣuṇī-vibhaṅga* (n. 60) it is not a *naṭa* who arrives but a *naṭācārya*, a "producer" (?).

[63] *Vibhaṅga*, Derge 'dul ba Ja 228b.7—Other references to this drama are unknown, at least to me, and even its subject matter is unclear. It could be connected with an account like that contained in the Pāli *Vidhurapaṇḍita-jātaka* (no. 545), but that is just a guess.

this ignores the pronoun *bdag cag gis* (''we'') that appears to be the subject of the verb *byas pa* (''produced''), it would fit with the narrative fact that the *naṭa* also had to get his material—as will be clear in a moment—from a leading member of the Group-of-Twelve *Bhikṣuṇīs*. But however it be read, the passage would seem again to reflect a period in which dramas were ''ephemeral,'' or at least did not yet circulate in fixed texts.

The *naṭa*, in any case, having determined to present a play on the subject of the Buddha approaches each of the Group-of-Six in turn, asking for details on a long list of events in the Buddha's life. But every member of the group who is asked asks in return what he intends to do with it, and when told by the *naṭa* that he will compose a drama, they say: ''Wretch! We are to make a show of the Teacher for you?! Say no more, and get out of here!.'' He then goes to the Group-of-Twelve and—in what is almost certainly a swipe at such *bhikṣuṇīs*—Sthūlanandā, who is the very first one he approaches, first asks if he will pay her (*kho mo la bca' ba'i rin sbyin nam/*). Then, when he agrees, she tells him all the detail in accordance with what is said in the *Abhiniṣkramaṇa-sūtra* (*mngon par 'byung ba'i mdo las rgya cher ji skad gsungs pa bzhin thams cad rgyas par bstan to*). Sthūlanandā—like several members of the Group-of-Six—is described as very learned (*bahuśruta*), one who knows the *Tripiṭaka* (*tripiṭa*), and as possessed of smooth and unfettered eloquence (*yuktamuktapratibhāna*).[64]

The text then says that the *naṭa*, after having obtained his material from Sthūlanandā, composed a play, but did not stop there with the edifying material she had supplied. He thought to himself:

> ''While I will be able with this to increase the good disposition[65] of those of this large crowd who are already well disposed, is there some means by which the undisposed might give rise to a good disposition?'' Having so thought, he, hotly resenting (*snying na ba = hṛdaya-paridahana*) the Group-of-Six *Bhikṣus*, and wanting to pay them back, began to continually follow them around.

[64] *Vibhaṅga*, Derge 'dul ba Ja 226b.6–227a.6—It is both telling and entirely consistent with what has been seen so far that those *bhikṣus* and *bhikṣuṇīs* who are characterized as very learned and as ''Tripiṭaka masters'' are, more often than not, also the ones who are the object of ambivalence, criticism, or satire.

[65] The Tibetan here and below is *dad pa*, which is probably translating *prasāda* or *śraddhā*, as it frequently does elsewhere. von Schiefner/Ralston translate this as ''faith,'' Lévi as ''foi'', but that seems unsuitable here: the *naṭa* is not trying to convert the crowds or preach to them, but to win their approval and thereby his fee. Cf., for example, the *sūtradhāra's* remark in the *Ratnāvāli* at the end of the *nāndī*: *aye. āvarjitāni sakalasāmājikānāṃ manāṃsīti me niścayaḥ*, which Lehot translates: ''Oh! La salle entière est d'avance conquise, sans doute!'' (Lehot, 1933, 3.8), and Kale as: ''Ah! I am quite sure, the minds of all the spectators have been won over (or favorably disposed towards us)'' (Kale, 1921, p. 118). The audience's interest obviously had to be captured. Even more to the point, Śāstrī (1964, I.4.16) says of traveling players: *kuśīlavāś cāgantavaḥ prekṣaṇakam eṣāṃ dadyuḥ / dvitīye 'hani tebhyaḥ pūjā niyataṃ labheran / tato yathāśraddham eṣāṃ darśanam utsargo vā/:* ''Visiting players also come and give an audition for them, and on the second day they are rewarded with a fixed fee. Then they may give a performance or be dismissed, according to their reception [*yathāśraddham*]'' (Doniger and Kakar, 2002, p. 19).

Once the Venerable Chanda, although he had finished eating his meal and made an end of it, when he obtained some particularly nice food and drink and wanted to eat it, he, washing his hands, and having formally accepted the particularly nice food and drink, squatted in front of the Venerable Udāyin while he was still eating his meal, and said: "Might the Venerable Udāyin please consider: I, the *bhikṣu* named Chanda, after eating my meal, making an end of it, completing it, and being finished, have obtained more food and drink and, since I want to eat it, might you make it surplus (*kṛtātirikta*) and present it to me?" Udāyin, having eaten two or three little bites of it, said: "Since it is made yours, now go away!'"

When the *naṭa* saw this he thought; "With this I will be able to make those who are undisposed well disposed as well." (Ja 227a.6-b.3)

Notice first of all here that when composing his drama the *naṭa* relied for his main theme on traditional, even textual material, but for what will be specifically identified as its comic 'interlude' he turned to direct observation. Notice too, that for that 'interlude' he focused on the behavior of members of the Group-of-Six, particularly on a characteristic they share with the *vidūṣaka* of classical drama: Chanda's obsession with food and his gluttony. Notice, finally, that even though it does not fully come across in translation, or without some knowledge of *vinaya* technicalities, the redactors here have already cleverly satirized elements of the *vinaya* itself: although asking, in effect, for help in getting around a *Prātimokṣa* rule (the 34th *pāyantikā* which makes it an offence to eat anything that has not been "made surplus," *akṛtātirikta*, after one has finished his meal), Chanda's posture (squatting) and formulaic, patterned speech (e.g., declaring his name), as well as his very polite diction all mimic the set from of a whole series of formal *vinaya* rituals (e.g. an individual's request for ordination).[66] On top of all this it is very likely that it would be hard for an Indian audience not to see in this scene the request by one person for another to turn "particularly nice food and drink" into *ucchiṣṭa*, "leftovers," making them impure and highly polluting.[67] The incongruity, the cultural silliness of this, it might have been understood, would have particularly recommended this scene to the *naṭa* for his purposes, and those purposes were explicitly comedic.

His drama now complete, the *naṭa* set up a canopy (*bla re bres te* = *vitānavitata*),[68] sounded his drum, and put on his performance. At some point in it—the text is not clear, but it may have been after the main performance—he introduced a theatrical or reworked version of the behavior of the *bhikṣus* belonging to the Group-of-Six that he had observed:

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[66] For convenience sake see Schopen (2004c), esp. pp. 232, 236, 238.

[67] See, for example, Olivelle (1998), reprinted in Olivelle (2005, pp. 217–245); esp. pp. 236–237 and copious references there.

[68] An interesting detail—there is obviously no theater here. For a recent paper on the frustrating question of whether or not there were theaters in early India see Moačanin (2003).

…One actor was made to appear as Udāyin, another actor as Chanda. Then, when he had filled a claybowl with ashes (*thal ba* = *bhasman*) and put two or three lumps of sugar on top of them, while squatting in front of the actor appearing as Udāyin who was eating his meal, the other actor said: "Might the Reverend Udāyin please consider: I the *bhikṣu* named Chanda, after eating my meal, making an end of it, completing it, and being finished, have obtained more food and drink and, since I want to eat it too, might you make it surplus and present it to me?" The actor appearing as Udāyin, when he had taken the two or three lumps of sugar from it and eaten them, dumped the ashes from the bowl on the head of the actor appearing as Chanda and said; "Since it is made yours, now go away!" And that entire crowd of large groups of people burst out with roars of laughter "Ha Ha!" (*ha ha zhes gad mo'i sgra chen po phyung ste*). Those who were undisposed, having become increasingly well disposed, said: "Brilliant—a crazy trick has been played! Brilliant—a crazy trick has been played! (*e ma'o smyon thabs byas so / e ma'o smyon thabs so zhes zer zhing*…—von Schiefner/Ralston: "…saying it was a mad prank;" Lévi: "… déclara que c'était une bouffonnerie folle"). And the *naṭa* made a handsome profit (Ja 228a.3-.7).

It is probably not difficult to see what, narratively, is going on here, and not easy to disagree with Lévi's description when he says that after the *naṭa* had observed the interaction between Udāyin and Chanda "il résolut d'amuser le public à leurs dépens," and "il transporta l'incident et les personages sur la scène, en forme de farce."[69] Although not explicitly called a farce, it is surely that. It involves the same sort of high jinks between religious figures as, for example, the *Mattavilāsa*, which itself also involves a bowl of food and a Buddhist *bhikṣu*, and was obviously meant to poke fun. But there are differences too, and they are striking: the *Vibhaṅga* text was almost certainly written centuries before the *Mattavilāsa*, and although it too is poking fun at Buddhist *bhikṣus*, it, unlike the *Mattavilāsa*, was almost certainly written by a *bhikṣu*. Once again it appears that the classical Indian farce or religious satire might well have had its roots in Buddhist *vinaya*.

More pertinent perhaps to our particular purposes, however, is the fact—historical, not narrative—that when the 'author' of the *Vibhaṅga* had to provide his *naṭa* with a comic subject he chose the behavior of the Group-of-Six. He did so, presumably, because he—the Buddhist *bhikṣu* 'author'—himself thought that the actions of this group of learned *bhikṣus* were funny, and that they would be perceived as such by any audience. Indeed, to judge by the reaction he attributed to the *naṭa's* audience, they must have been considered absolutely hilarious. It is, of course, not necessary to assert that a single 'author' wrote not only our *Vibhaṅga* text, but all of those that have been cited here dealing with the incongruous doings of the Group-of-Six, in order to maintain that this *Vibhaṅga* text is as close as we are likely to get to a contemporary witness to the reaction to these tales in their own context. And that, after all, is

[69] Lévi (1890, p. 55).

what we have been looking for all along. The only thing that might be funnier, perhaps, is the lugubrious labor it takes today to establish this. The joke, indeed, may be on us—it is those who quote texts and 'doctrine,' it seems, who come off looking ridiculous.

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